[His Excellency the Governor] [18th August 1925

" Hon. Members will in due course be asked to vote supplementary demands indicating in detail the proposed utilization of this sum, which will enable the hon. the Ministers to carry out their progressive schemes in the Departments of Education, Public Health and Industries. Funds will, I hope, thus be made available for the extension of elementary education, medical relief, water-supply, and roads in rural areas. There is also before Government a proposal to make provision for granting further relief to tubercular patients in this Presidency, and fighting the terrible disease which takes annually such heavy toll of our people.

" The hon. the Minister for Development will move a resolution that the Cotton Transport Act be made applicable to this Presidency in order to protect certain areas in which cotton of good quality is grown from the admixture of inferior cotton. The practice of adulterating cotton has grown to such a point that the cultivator of good cotton is no longer able to realize the intrinsic value of his produce.

" In conclusion, I have to inform hon. Members that I have decided to allot two days for non official business this month.

" I have briefly adumbrated the important matters which will form the subject of discussion during this session of the Council and I pray that Providence may guide your deliberations in the interests of the peace and contentment of the people of this Presidency." (Cheers).

III

(1)

REMARKS BY THE HON. THE PRESIDENT ON INTERPELLATIONS.

* The hon. the PRESIDENT :—" I have to make a few remarks on the subject of questions. The number of questions generally, and of starred questions in particular, which are set down to be answered every day has grown so steadily of late that I have once more to invite the co-operation of hon. Members in restricting questions to matters of fact which are not only of public concern but on which useful information can be furnished by the Government.

" The first category of objectionable questions consists of interpellations which are not, properly speaking, questions but merely matters to which it is desired to draw the attention of the Government.

" (*a*) It is obvious that a question is not constituted as such by merely placing a note of interrogation at the end of a sentence giving utterance to a sentiment or a truism, to an argument or an innuendo, to a censure of a public official or to a grievance suffered by a private person. Every question demands an answer ; but a question evasive of the rules is not unnaturally provocative of an answer evasive of the question. For instance, if the Government are asked how long they are going to take to pass orders on a subject which has been under consideration for perhaps ten years, the question is in effect a censure of the Government, and the answer to it naturally cannot be very illuminating.

" (*b*) Above all, a question ought to be short and it cannot be short if an M.L.C. insists on telling first of all a long story in the form of a series of questions, and if, in the event, twenty questions are put by way of introduction to the last question which alone required an answer. In this case,

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owing to the form adopted by the interpellator, the Government have to prepare twenty superfluous answers and many of them would, in the circumstances just stated, be of the kind called evasive.

"(c) Occasionally, a huge return is asked for, let us suppose, as to how many Brahmans, how many non-Brahmans, how many Christians, how many Muhammadans and how many members of the depressed classes have applied for one acre, for two acres, for three acres of land in the several taluks of several districts or in all the districts of the Presidency. What the interpellator wants the return for is as a rule not stated, but it is left to be inferred from the party to which he belongs or from the interest which he represents in the Council, that what he really had in mind was a grievance of a single individual in a village who got one acre of land, having asked for three. In all cases in which returns are asked for, I would suggest to hon. Members to bear in mind that, apart from the expenditure of time entailed by the compilation of a special return, it duplicates labour in case it embodies information already available, though not possibly on so comprehensive a scale, in annual reports. It is therefore advisable for hon. Members to examine the annual departmental reports carefully before asking for special returns.

"(d) Questions, of the three classes above described, cannot be pruned by the Secretary to the Council unless he first of all analyses and dissects them not only at the expense of much time and trouble but at the risk of Members complaining of mutilation of their questions. I propose in such cases to cause the questions themselves to be returned in order that they may be shorn of excrescences which will be pointed out in the Secretary's covering letter.

"The second class of objectionable questions is that which seeks (a) information that could be more easily obtained from ordinary sources or (b) information that does not come within the official knowledge—what rule 8 calls the *special cognizance*—or duties of the Member of the Government concerned, or (c) information relating to matters for which local authorities are primarily responsible. Especially where an hon. Member has addressed a subordinate authority, and, pending consideration of the matter by such authority, also addresses a question to the Government, it is not surprising that no immediate or definite answer is forthcoming on behalf of the Government. I would suggest that hon. Members might, when the nature of the question obviously admits of or demands it, specify the kind of information already furnished, or the orders already passed, by lower authorities or mention what public interest is served by carrying the matter up to the Government. In many cases at present, it is self-evident from the tenor of a question that the Government are interpellated as if no machinery existed for enquiring into grievances and redressing them locally.

"The last observation which I wish to make on the subject of questions is aimed at the very questionable practice of publishing questions in the daily press, before the same are admitted by the President or included in notice-papers issuing from the Council office. The object of these notice-papers is to place hon. Members as quickly as possible in possession of information regarding admitted questions and notices of resolutions; but the object is frustrated when unauthorized editions of questions and other notices, including matter which eventually may have to be disallowed, are put in circulation at the same time as the official publications.

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"I have on hand a practical illustration of the difficulties which I have brought to the notice of hon. Members. We are placing starred questions before the House at the rate of eight questions for each hon. Member who has addressed such questions. We shall probably sit for five days at the most this month, and that means that each hon. Member will have as a maximum 40 starred questions answered in the course of this meeting. It has been calculated that more than 60 or 70 questions in all answers to which have already been received in the office will have to be carried forward to the next meeting because the maximum would otherwise be exceeded, and the maximum cannot be exceeded without disappointing hon. Members who desire to put supplementary questions. As I have already stated, hon. Members will have to decide in such cases whether they will carry over their questions to the next meeting to be answered orally or whether they will allow the answers to their questions to be included in the official report of the last day of this meeting."

(ii)

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

[*Order made by the President of the Madras Legislative Council under Standing Order No. 15 on the 4th December 1924*—

1. Starred questions to be put at a meeting of the Council with their answers shall be printed and placed on the Council table an hour before the President takes his seat.

The Secretary shall call out the name of each interpellator in the order in which the names are printed, specify the serial number of his question and make a sufficient pause to give him or any other Member a reasonable opportunity of rising in his place and putting a supplementary question. Supplementary questions must be put immediately after the principal questions to which they relate.

2. If a Member responsible for a starred question happens to be absent when it is called, it will be open either to him or to any other Member to put supplemental questions thereon after the other starred questions for the day have been answered, provided question-time is not thereby exceeded.

3. Questions, not starred, will not be called in Council, but they will be printed with their answers and placed on the table of the House along with the list of starred questions Oral supplementary questions will not be allowed in regard to unstarred questions.]

STARRED QUESTIONS.

Agency.

Alleged arrest of one Sunder Narayan Deo in the Vizagapatam Agency.

*1 Q.—Sriman SASIBHUSHAN RATH Mahasayo: Will the hon. the Law Member be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether he is cognizant of the recent arrest of Sunder Narayan Deo and some others of Kalyanasingpur in the Vizagapatam Agency;

(*b*) whether it is a fact that Sunder Narayan Deo is a claimant to the estate of Kalyanasingpur and whether he is in actual possession thereof;

(*c*) at whose instance and under what authority the said arrests were made;

(*d*) whether the Maharaja of Jeypore claims possession of the estate of Kalyanasingpur;

(*e*) whether the Agent to the Governor or any of those working under him in the Agency have arrested Sunder Narayan Deo and others with a view to secure forcible possession of the estate for the Maharaja; and

(*f*) whether the Maharaja has sought Government intervention of any sort?